

from our viewpoint...

Who decided Hays was a 'capital' city?

How do you suppose people back east ever came to consider Hays the "capital" city of northwest Kansas?

It's true that Hays is the "big city" out here, with a county population of 27,000. Thomas County is next-most populous with 8,000.

But Hays is pretty much in the center of the state, barely in northwest Kansas at all.

Look at the map.

Hays is as far south as you can get and still be in the northwest. Almost as far east as you can get, if you figure the halfway point is somewhere between Russell and Ellsworth.

The problem, as usual, starts with the perception of people in eastern Kansas. They think anything west of Salina is Way Out There. And that includes a good two-thirds of the state.

If you tell someone you live in western Kansas, they brighten and say, "Oh, is that close to Hays?" It's hard to explain that many of us have to drive more than two hours to get to Hays.

The average state official driving west to meet someone is pretty much tuckered out after driving two hours to Salina. It's another hour from there to western Kansas, and yet another hour to Hays. In eastern Kansas, two hours will get you just about anywhere.

So after driving four hours, though, an easterner figures you must be deep into northwest Kansas. It doesn't work that way, as we all know.

Out here, we're used to driving six, seven hours to get to a ball game at Lawrence or a meeting in Kansas City. We know just how far it is across the state.

Even so, if a state agency or a statewide group wants to condescend to meet in "western" Kansas, they'll pick Hays every time. Hey, it's closer. For them.

Other towns might have a claim to being the most convenient meeting spot in the northwest.

Oberlin and Phillipsburg, have good facilities. Colby is central to the northwest corner of the northwest, and it's got a college, more people and so on.

It seems the towns you think of meeting in cluster along I-70 or U.S. 36, with a gap of sorts in the middle. Osborne and Beloit might object to that kind of thinking, but Beloit isn't really in northwest Kansas, either. Too far east.

What Hays has going for it is one thing, really: a four-year state college.

Civic leaders showed great foresight when they talked Congress into donating the unused military reservation southwest of town to the state as the site of a "normal" school, which later became a "teachers college" and still later a "university."

Nothing ensures economic growth in this country like a good state university, and Hays built one.

Elsewhere in the northwest, Colby has the junior college and Goodland the technical college, both fine institutions, but far smaller than Fort Hays State.

So population and economic power weigh in for Hays, but really, it's location — closer to the east — that tips the scale.

Want to make someone from the east blanch and squirm? Suggest having the next meeting in Goodland or Colby. Just see what they say.

"Why, we can't drive all day to get to a meeting," might be a good guess.

What do they think we do, living out here?

It's not fair, but there you have it. — *Steve Haynes*



Wedding celebration brings back memories

We attended the 50th wedding anniversary of some dear friends on Saturday.

Bob and Gerri Sweeney tied the knot on Sept. 7, 1958, and went on own and operate a slew of newspapers while raising four children.

We met them in 1981 while attending our first Colorado Press convention in Denver. The Sweeney's were old hands at both press conventions and child rearing by then as most of their children were teen-agers while ours were between 6 and 8 months old.

Steve asked how to get involved in the group and Bob, big and bluff and sensing a kindred spirit, just slapped him on the back and started introducing him around.

Bob's been doing that for the last 27 years.

He nudged Steve into working on this and that in the Colorado Press Association and before long Steve was being sworn in as president of the group, a job Bob had held several years before.

Back in 1981 we were living in the tiny community of Creede in the mountains and the Sweeneys were running a weekly, then a daily paper in Craig. We didn't get to see each other except once or twice a year at meetings. Then it was like a family reunion as we compared how



cynthia haynes
• open season

big the kids had gotten and who was causing the most trouble for the competition.

The Sweeney's sold their paper and moved to Denver, where then started another newspaper, The Villager, which still serves Greenwood Village, a upscale suburb.

We sold our operation, which by then included six weeklies and a daily, and moved to Kansas to start over.

With the move to Kansas our visits became less frequent. We still saw each other once a year at the February meeting in Denver since we stayed on as associate members of the Colorado Press. Still, our paths seem to be diverging as we became more involved in the Kansas Press Association, a group Steve lead in 1998, just 10 years after his term as president in Colorado.

Then one winter as we were talking and mingling at the Brown Palace on our annual

trek to Denver, Bob put his arm around Steve's shoulder and said, "You need to get involved in the National Newspaper Association."

Bob was on the board of the national group and he wanted us to stop just sending in our dues and get with the program.

That year we attended the national convention in Reno, Nev. I've always suspected we went to the convention because we could take the train. Nevertheless, Steve was hooked.

He ran for the national board and lost the election.

That February Bob put his arm around Steve's shoulder and said, "If you want to join the board, don't give up. They always need good people."

Two months later the man, who won the election, resigned and Steve was selected to fill his seat.

Bob served as president of the the national group and this year it was Steve's turn to follow in his footsteps again.

They've been really big footsteps but as Bob danced with his bride of 50 years on Saturday, I knew why we've followed his advise.

It's always been as good as his dancing.

Great to see flags for Patriot Day

To the Editor:

I am writing to congratulate the Kiwanis Club for their American flag project. It is impressive to drive down the streets of Goodland on holidays and on Sept. 11, and see all the American flags flying.

Congratulations and KUDOS to the Kiwanis Club on this project and a job well done!

With the Flatlander Festival coming up in a few weeks, it would be nice to see the American flags displayed that weekend and show our out of town visitors what a respectful community we are and we have pride and that it is "Good Land."

It would also be nice to show our pride in our town by property owners mowing weeds and trimming weeds around poles, curbs and gutters. There will be many visitors whether it is for the stock car races, motorcycle show or the car show. Let's please take pride in making the town presentable and appealing so they will come back and visit again.

I would encourage car owners in the area that have vehicles they could enter in the Brick Top Cruisers car show during the Flatlander Festival weekend to please do so. There are so many vehicles that are sitting in garages and storage units that could be entered for everyone



from our readers
• to the editor

to see and admire.

It would be nice to see our Main Street lined with vehicles of all types of makes and models. People enjoy looking at, talking about and reminiscing of how their uncle or brother use to own one or they had one going to school back in the day.

It is a good weekend of camaraderie, idea sharing and good fun. Please don't think your vehicle is not good enough or car show quality as it doesn't have to be in mint condition. We have a motto in the car club "if it has wheels, bring it!"

For more contact information or pre-registration forms, please visit www.bricktopcruisers.com.

We would love to see you there. Let's please make a good impression and let everyone else in the country know what we already know, that Goodland is a "Good" place to visit and hopefully they will return next year.

Barb Thomas
Goodland

To the Editor:

The Kansas Sampler Foundation of Inman is featuring the "8 Wonders of Kansas" in various different areas to make people more aware of the wonders of our great state.

They are taking votes for the "8 Wonders of Kansas Art." They have 24 finalists and they are taking votes for the official 8 Wonders of Kansas Art.

We urge all Kansans to vote for these Wonders, and we would particularly like to encourage people to vote for the magnificent works of Charlie and Pat Norton, our Buffalo Bill bronze sculpture in Oakley.

You can vote on line at www.kansassampler.org or call (620) 585-2374 for a paper ballot. Please follow directions carefully or your vote will not count.

If you have not visited our monumental Buffalo Bill bronze sculpture, we heartily encourage you to do so. We thank you in advance for any support you might give us.

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